

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NEW HORIZONS IN EDUCATION  
INTE2012

Teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding the necessity, the  
usefulness and the impact of modern evaluation methods on  
the performance of pupils in secondary education

Assis.Prof. PhD. Otilia Sanda Bersan,

*Faculty of Sociology and Psychology, Department of Sciences of Education West University of Timișoara, Boulevard V. Parvan,  
no. 4, Timisoara, Romania*

---

**Abstract**

In their attempt to improve educational evaluation, teachers' efforts and interests are most often focused on identifying and using the most suitable ways, strategies, methods and techniques of evaluating pupils' scholastic performance.

Our research analyzes the teachers' opinions and beliefs regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative evaluation methods on the scholastic performance of pupils in secondary education.

© 2012 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of The Association of Science, Education and Technology Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

**Keywords:** opinion, beliefs, alternative evaluation methods, performances, scholastic results

---

**Research objectives**

The overall objective of this study consists of investigating secondary education teachers' opinions regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative evaluation methods on the scholastic performance and results of pupils in secondary education.

We started from the premise that teachers' understanding and appropriation of the necessity and usefulness of alternative educational evaluation methods leads to a (more) favorable attitude towards the latter, and, implicitly, to the disposition of using them more frequently in their didactic activity.

**The general hypothesis**

As teachers become more aware of the necessity and the usefulness of alternative evaluation methods, they start using them more frequently in their didactic activity.

**Specific hypotheses**

- making teachers aware of the usefulness and efficacy of alternative evaluation methods, by way of pupil feedback and personal reflection, engenders a change of the teachers' beliefs towards these methods and determines them to use these methods more and more frequently in evaluating pupils' scholastic performance;
- (self-) monitoring the progress obtained in evaluating pupils' scholastic performance increases teachers' confidence in the worth of alternative educational evaluation methods.

**The research design**

In our investigation we have used several research instruments that we ourselves devised, namely:

- The structured journal which was used to find out what the teachers' opinions and beliefs were regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative/complementary educational evaluation methods on the scholastic performance of pupils in secondary education.
- The reflective journal is an open instrument which was intended to find out if the teachers' answers grew less conformist and if their inclination toward social desirability bias decreased.
- The progress sheet assessed the degree in which the use of some alternative evaluation methods contributed to the evolution of the responding teachers' careers, from a cognitive, methodological and behavioural point of view.

Before starting out study, we organized short meetings and debates, in the form of focus groups, among the teachers from each participating school, in order to make them aware of the main alternative methods of scholastic evaluation and their necessity and usefulness (the way in which they complement classic/traditional evaluation methods). At the same time we wanted to encourage teachers to use certain alternative evaluation methods in their didactic activity and to determine what impact these methods have on the pupils' performance levels and their psychological comfort.

Within the focus group we also introduced the proposed investigative methods (the structured and the reflective journal, the progress sheet) to make sure that these will be used adequately and in accordance with the objectives of our research.

**The subject sample**

The subject sample we studied consisted of 151 secondary school teachers.

The participating teachers had on scholastic semester at their disposal to respond to the research instruments we have described previously. Their supervision took place through periodical (monthly) meetings in order for us to determine and encourage them to record their responses to the tasks that they were given. At the same time, we also took care to ensure the confidentiality of their answers.

**Data analysis and interpretation**

The teachers' answers to the items of the structured journal reveal the fact that most secondary school teachers are constantly preoccupied with evaluating their pupils' scholastic output correctly and objectively.

Thus, where pupil evaluation planning is concerned the cumulated percentage of all the items referring to this activity, as reflected in the teachers' answers (questions 1 to 6 in the structured journal), is 94.6% favorable to understanding the need to come up with, design and plan the performance evaluation in accordance with teaching objectives – learning in the sense of the pupil's awareness of what the teachers' expectations are and learning to attain the required scholastic progress (Figure 1).

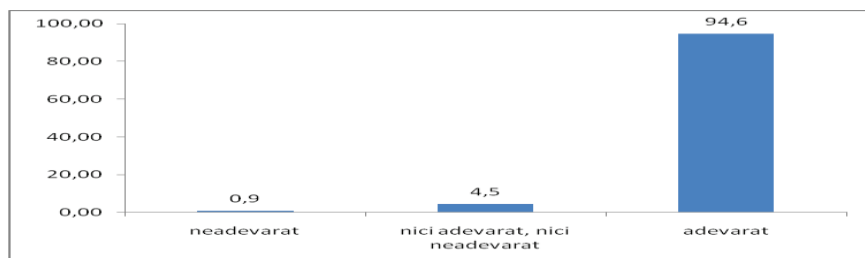


Figure 1: The graphic representation of teachers' responses regarding evaluation planning (false, neither true nor false, true)

In this context, at the stage of designing their didactic activities, we can identify the teachers' preoccupation with establishing their pupil evaluation strategies, methods and instruments. Thus, 98.7% of teachers claim that evaluation is a key preoccupation and all the questioned teachers (100%) claim that they want to diversify evaluation methods by including some alternative methods.

The subjects' responses to the items regarding preoccupation with improving pupil evaluation, the objectivity of evaluation and ensuring the necessary psychological comfort for pupils proves that the great majority of responding teachers have a strong interest in the area (Figure 1 and Figure 3).

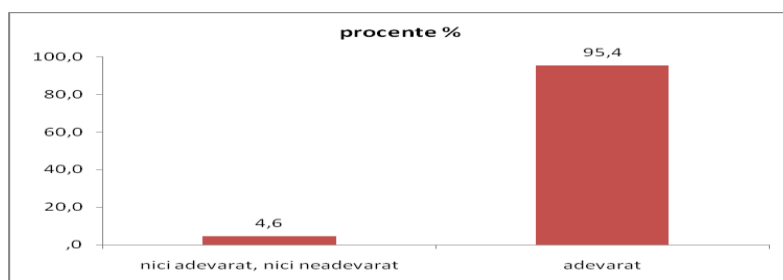


Figure 2: Teachers' preoccupation with improving pupils' scholastic performance evaluation (neither true nor false, true)

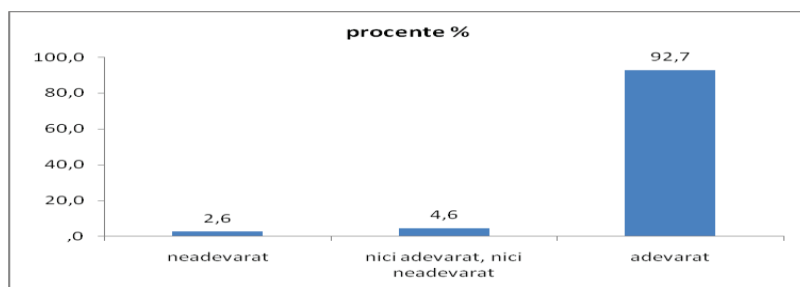


Figure 3: Teachers' preoccupation with the accuracy and objectivity of pupil evaluation (false, neither true nor false, true)

Where formative evaluation is concerned, we can notice that over 97% of teachers who participated in our study display an interest in and preoccupation for assessing the effort put in by the pupils in the learning process. At the same time, teachers are interested in using alternative evaluation methods that have a positive impact on the pupils' psychological comfort. Figure 4 illustrates this fact:

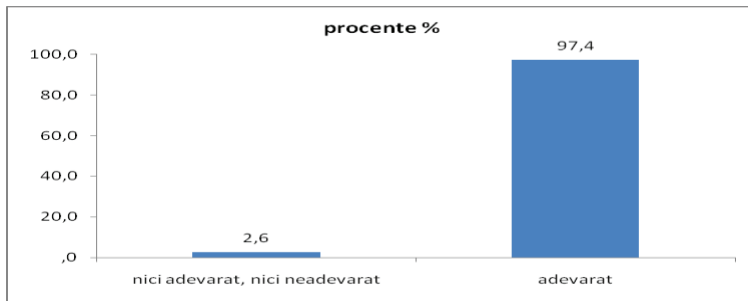


Figure 4: Teachers' evaluation of pupils' learning process (Percentage: neither true nor false, true)

Summative evaluation, which is predominately used by teachers, is meant to determine and assess the results of the pupil's learning process. The teachers confess that they are interested in the pupils' performance levels and, simultaneously, that in achieving this goal, especially with the aid of alternative methods they assess:

- the quality of the pupils' information sources;
- the original approach to given learning tasks;
- the originality of the outcome;
- the cooperation and collaboration among pupils, in the case of group assignments, etc.

Thus, 94.7% of participating teachers mention being preoccupied with achieving as objective a summative evaluation as possible, mostly by employing alternative methods for the evaluation of pupils' scholastic performance (Figure 5).

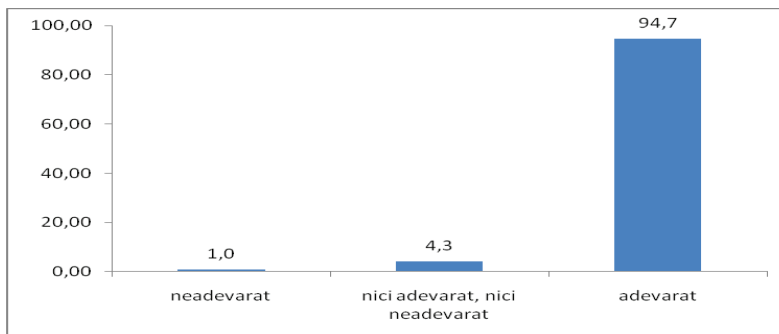


Figure 5: The graphic representation of teachers' responses regarding the summative evaluation of the pupils' scholastic performance. (false, neither true nor false, true)

Where the formative character of evaluating pupils' scholastic performance is concerned, 77.5% of teachers claim to believe in the veracity of the following affirmation: "I can evaluate pupils' scholastic performances with greater accuracy and objectivity, provided I use alternative methods, as opposed to classic ones" (Figure 6).

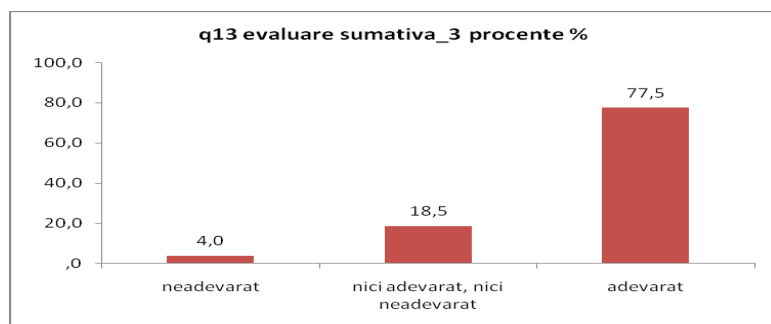


Figure 6: Teachers' opinions regarding the accuracy and objectivity of evaluating pupils' scholastic performances through alternative methods (Summative evaluation: false, neither true nor false, true)

Where the formative gain of pupils assessed through alternative methods is concerned, 86.8% of participating teachers declared that this can be recorded with the help of alternative methods of evaluating pupils' scholastic results (Figure 7).

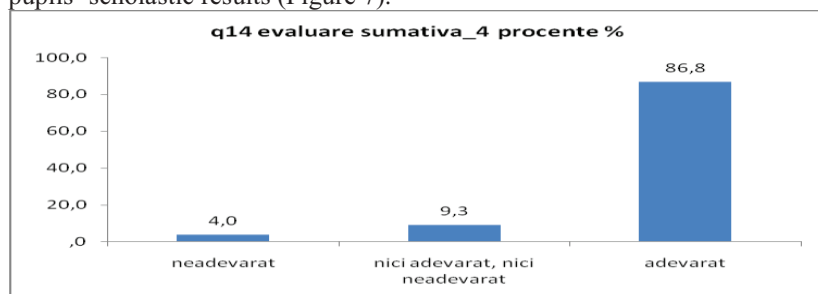


Figure 7: The teachers' opinion regarding the formative character of pupils' scholastic performance evaluation with the help of alternative methods (false, neither true nor false, true)

Cumulating teachers' answers to the questions pertaining to this section of the structured journal (feedback and personal reflection), we can ascertain that 82% of the participating teachers claim that the following affirmations are true:

- "I am interested to find out the pupils' opinions regarding the means of scholastic performance evaluation I use";
- "I am interested to diversify the performance evaluation methods I use";
- "I take into consideration the satisfaction and the psychological comfort of my pupils when I evaluate their scholastic performance";
- "I try to establish the efficacy of alternative evaluation methods";
- "I have some reservations about the use of alternative evaluation methods".

Figure 9 illustrates what has been mentioned above.

The teachers' answers to the question about their reservations concerning the use of alternative evaluation methods confirm that, quite on the contrary, for the majority these reservations are unfounded. A percentage of 76.2% of respondents claim that in their case the following assertion is false: "I have some reservations about the use of alternative evaluation methods" (Figure 8).

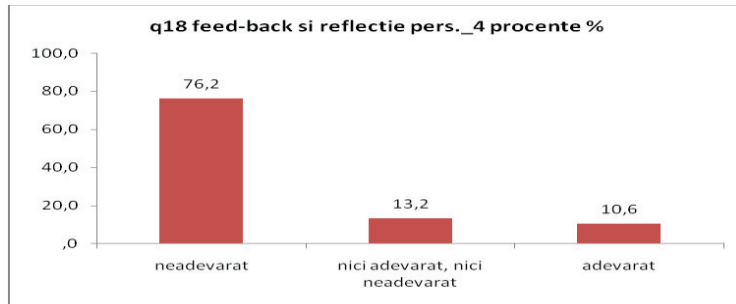


Figure 8: Teachers' opinion concerning their reservations about alternative evaluation methods (false, neither true nor false, true)

Where the efficacy of alternative evaluation methods is concerned, 91.4% of respondents declare that they are preoccupied with determining these methods' degree of efficacy (Figure 9).

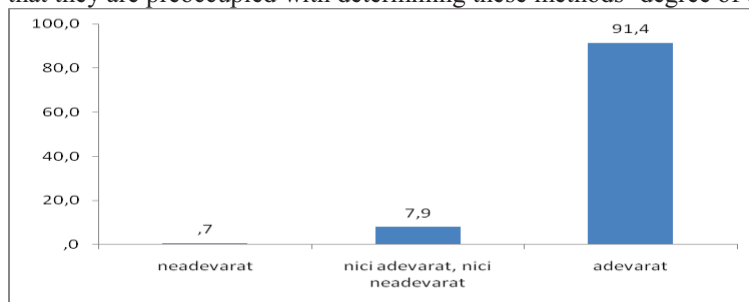


Figure 9: Teachers' opinion about the efficacy of alternative evaluation methods (false, neither true nor false, true)

In conclusion, the analysis and interpretation of the data we obtained from the teachers' responses to the items of the structured journal underscore the fact that our hypotheses are in fact confirmed.

Thus, as the teachers become aware, through feedback and personal reflection, of the qualities and virtues of alternative evaluation methods when it comes to assessing pupils' scholastic performance, their willingness to use them more and more frequently will also intensify.

At the same time, the teachers observe the efficacy of these methods of scholastic evaluation together with the increase of the evaluated pupils' psychological comfort.

It is obvious that, despite their qualities and virtues, alternative methods of scholastic evaluation are not without flaws. Therefore, they should be used cautiously and moderately alongside classic methods.

Through its particularities, the structured journal, which asks for subjects' answers about themselves, their attitudes, their beliefs and personal opinion, could be and, to a certain extent is already, influenced by the social bias phenomenon (the subjects' tendency to shine a favourable light on themselves). Due to this fact, we considered it necessary to find new solutions that might mitigate the "distorted effects" of this investigation instrument. Thus, we employed a different research instrument, the *reflective journal* which "formally has approximately the same configuration" as the structured journal. However, it allows for a greater freedom for the subjects to express their opinions honestly and

freely regarding the necessity, the usefulness and the impact of alternative evaluation methods on the pupils' personal development.

Thus, the teachers participating in our research were asked to write such a journal, expressing their opinions, ideas and reflections concerning modern / alternative evaluation methods. In order to prevent the uncontrolled dispersion of the respondents' opinions, the (open) reflective journal included several suggestions at the beginning.

The instructions for filling in the reflective journal, formulated in the form of several self-interrogations guided the teachers' reflective activity. Their answers were analyzed taking into account the requirements of the reflective journal (evaluation planning, formative evaluation, summative evaluation, feedback and personal reflection) and the curricular field to which the participating teacher belonged (language and communication, mathematics and science, people and society).

A qualitative analysis of the teacher's opinions regarding their evaluation activity and the pupils' scholastic performance emphasizes the following elements:

- most teachers, regardless of their specialization, plan their evaluation activities taking into account their pupils' abilities, the nature of the subject that is taught and the established teaching-learning objectives;
- many teachers use alternative methods of educational evaluation, which they believe to be useful, and helping the pupils feel that they are appreciated and valued;
- the use of alternative evaluation methods should occur in parallel with the application of classic/traditional methods;
- alternative methods of educational evaluation have a higher degree of efficacy because they allow pupils' results to be gauged and assessed with greater accuracy and objectivity, and at the same time they give pupils a higher degree of psychological comfort;
- more so than traditional evaluation methods, alternative methods gauge and assess pupils' originality and creativity better, they stimulate pupils' intellectual potential, their active involvement in the process of learning, they stir pupils' interest and curiosity, favouring a heuristic type learning;
- some teachers claim that using alternative evaluation methods is comfortable but they cannot give up traditional types of evaluation;
- alternative methods lead to predominantly qualitative evaluation, which is why some teachers seem reluctant to use them;
- alternative evaluation methods are liked by students but their efficacy is not always as expected;
- alternative methods make evaluation more attractive to pupils, more likeable;
- some teachers' reluctance to use alternative evaluation methods derives from the lack of knowledge surrounding these methods' positive characteristics and the lack of knowledge in how to use them;
- alternative evaluation methods achieve a global evaluation of the pupils, advancing their type of intelligence;
- alternative evaluation methods fulfill a motivational function, stirring pupils' interest in learning;
- many teachers claim that they are interested in knowing more alternative evaluation methods and acquiring the necessary abilities to use them adequately.

In order to underscore the progress from a cognitive-informational and technical-procedural point of view (of the abilities to employ alternative methods of educational evaluation), we used an instrument entitled "progress sheet" through which we tried to quantify the gain achieved during a school

semester by all the teachers involved in our study who used alternative evaluation methods. With the help of this progress sheet we tried to identify:

- ≈ the cognitive and procedural gain achieved by employing new methods of educational evaluation;
- ≈ the participating teachers' perception and opinion regarding the efficacy of these methods;
- ≈ teachers' awareness of both the strong and the weak points of alternative evaluation methods, and a subsequent change in attitudes;
- ≈ the degree of usefulness, efficacy and comfort (for students) that teachers assign to alternative evaluation methods in comparison to traditional ones.

The progress sheet was filled in by teachers towards the end of the evaluation period. This progress sheet followed the trajectory and evidently the progress achieved by pupils during the months they were monitored and evaluated through various evaluation methods, and especially through alternative evaluation methods.

### *Final conclusions*

Our research has shown that:

- a) using alternative methods of evaluating scholastic performances increases pupils' learning motivation, enhances the quality and the efficacy of the instructional-educational process in school and creates a higher psychological comfort for the pupils,
- b) the teachers becoming aware of the necessity, usefulness and the value of alternative methods of evaluation generates changes in their attitudes and practices, in the sense that they begin to use alternative methods more often.

Teachers in secondary education manifest a willingness to use alternative evaluation methods in the belief that it increases their objectivity in evaluating pupils' scholastic performance. At the same time, the pupils believe that in this way they are evaluated more fairly and the controversies regarding possible evaluation errors decrease.

We can notice that the teachers' reluctance to use alternative evaluation methods goes down as they start to understand these methods' usefulness and necessity and as they learn how to use them. Changes in attitude, mentality and practice are brought about by the teachers becoming aware of the value of these alternative evaluation methods and employing them in the classroom. The pupils' perception when it comes to the evaluation of their scholastic results determines teachers to adapt their evaluation methods and strategies to the characteristics of the discipline and the pupils' expectations.

The qualitative analysis of teachers' opinions regarding the evaluation activity has highlighted significant aspects about the use of alternative evaluation methods. Out of these we would like to mention the following:

- the favorable opinion held by the majority of teachers participating in this research referring to the necessity, usefulness and the value of alternative methods of educational evaluation
- the teachers' belief that alternative evaluation methods have a greater efficacy due to the fact that pupils favour them and that they believe evaluation as no longer being a condemnation but a stimulus;
- most teachers have realized that the use of alternative evaluation methods contributes to achieving a predominantly qualitative evaluation;
- despite some difficulties and the teachers' reluctance concerning alternative evaluation methods, most support the idea that these methods are favoured by pupils and that as a consequence they feel that they "have to use" them;
- many teachers show the desire to learn more information, especially of the technical and procedural kind, referring to the use of alternative methods of educational evaluation.



*References:*

1. Bocoș, M. și Jucan D. (2007). *Teoria și metodologia instruirii. Teoria și metodologia evaluării. Repere și instrumente didactice pentru formarea profesorilor*. Pitești. Editura Paralela 45.
2. Cardinet, J. (1994). *Evaluation scolaire et pratique*. Bruxelles. Universite de Boeck.
3. Manolescu, M. (2005). *Evaluarea școlară. Metode, tehnici, instrumente*. București. Editura Meteor Press.
4. Oprea, C. L. (2009). *Strategii didactice interactive*. București. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
5. Potolea, D., Neacșu, I., Iucu, B. R., Pânișoară. I. O. (coord.). (2008). *Pregătirea psihopedagogică*. Manual pentru definitivat și gradul didactic II. Iași. Editura Polirom. Iași.
6. Rea-Dickins, P. și Germaine, K. (1992). *Evaluation*. New York. Oxford University Press.
7. Ungureanu, D. (2001). *Teroarea creionului roșu. Evaluarea educațională*. Timișoara. Editura Universității de Vest.
8. Wolf, A. (1995). *Competence – based assesment*. Philadelphia. Open University Press. Buckingham.